Sea of Silence

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/34696735.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Original Characters
Additional Tags:	Post-Fall (Hannibal), Mute Hannibal Lecter, Hurt/Comfort, Murder Husbands, Cannibalism, Whump, Explicit Sexual Content, Top Hannibal Lecter, Bottom Will Graham, Domestic Fluff, Insecure Hannibal Lecter, Murder, Hurt Hannibal Lecter, Hurt Will Graham
Language:	English
Collections:	Hannigram_Reverse_Bang_2021, Hannigram_Reverse_Bang_2021
Stats:	Published: 2021-10-30 Words: 10,209 Chapters: 7/7

Sea of Silence

by hit_the_books

Summary

After falling from the bluff, Hannibal and Will end up in St. John’s, Newfoundland. While time will allow some wounds to heal, Hannibal and Will must find new ways to express and navigate their shifting relationship together.

Notes

I was so happy to find myself with the chance to write something for NinPotato's art piece. Just how did they end up in the situation you'll see later on in this story? What was the road like? I just wanted to know and now I do.

You can go and see Nin's piece here. Thank you for your encouragement over the course of the bang <3

And thanks to AerisSimia and pauri for being my beta readers.

I hope you enjoy the story and the art. See you in the comments, dear reader.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Sea of Silence art by NinPotato

The Fall

Rapture.

That was the feeling Hannibal had found himself suffused with as Will dragged them off the bluff to drown in the churning crush of the Atlantic.

But now as he grips Will to his chest and swims for shore, lungs burning, blood trailing out behind him, Hannibal can't decide whether he should curse himself or Will for the two of them clinging onto life despite the odds. A wave crashes over their heads and Hannibal holds Will tight as the ocean leaves Hannibal bereft of all sense of direction until they resurface once more.

He blinks the salt water from his eyes and sights the shore again in the moonlight. Direction determined, Hannibal kicks his legs—one shoe gone—and propels them to the shore as he starts to feel a warm trickle of blood from the right side of his exposed neck. Head light, Hannibal keeps kicking; keeps Will clutched to him as they ride the next wave and the next until finally they emerge onto shore.

Consciousness threatening to leave him, Hannibal pulls the two of them up the sand, wincing at the sand pressing into his wounds.

"H-Hannibal?" Will splutters from Hannibal's hold, just as he finally collapses and his vision begins to darken.

Working his throat, Hannibal tries to reply, but no words come out as he opens and closes his mouth.

Will pulls his way out of Hannibal's arms and sways as he gets to his feet. Watching the younger man is like viewing the whole scene from a slowly deepening tunnel, and Hannibal

tries again to talk, to move.

“Shit! Hannibal!” Will yells, or at least Hannibal guesses he’s yelling. Everything is dimmed, just the wrong side of quiet. His gaze drifts and lands on the yacht tied to the small dock jutting out from the opposite end of the beach and Will follows it.

“Okay, right. Okay, we need to get out of here. I’m going to drag you,” Will says, voice still faraway. *It’s a shame it’s so far away*, Hannibal thinks as Will grips him under his arms and starts to drag Hannibal across the sand.

The tunnel grows deeper, blackness sweeping up its sides. Hannibal tries again to speak, to say that the boat is his and they can use it to get away before Uncle Jack arrives. But all that comes out from Hannibal’s mouth are a series of harsh gargles.

“It’s okay! We’re going to be okay!” Will shouts but it still seems like he’s coming through a layer of soundproofing.

I should be hurting, Hannibal considers distantly as he fails to feel any of his many wounds. *Adrenaline*, he concludes. The tunnel is deeper now and the trail they’re leaving in the sand is a faint distant line.

The tunnel stretches one last time and the velvet blackness of its edge collapses in on itself and swallows the moonlight and Will, as consciousness finally flees Hannibal Lecter, as Will Graham screams at the older man to hold on. Begs for him not to leave.

***

Will had not been expecting either of them to survive the fall from the bluff. But as he does his utmost in keeping Hannibal alive, Will decides that he has made a grave error. The picture they had painted was beautiful. Immensely so.

And now Hannibal is bleeding from too many places as he lies atop a dining nook table in the yacht’s galley kitchen. Will managed to find Hannibal’s extensive first aid supplies easily, but Hannibal being unconscious due to Will’s actions, is a touch more than Will is comfortable with right this moment. All he can take solace in instead, is that he has a clean and modern space to work in, and not some rotting hulk.

Please wake up, dammit! Will curses inside his head, as he finishes cleaning and stitching up the bullet wound that the Dragon gave Hannibal. He’s been slowly patching Hannibal up for over an hour and as his own cheek throbs again, he knows he needs to start paying attention to himself.

Turning to refresh supplies and position himself away from Hannibal so he has enough space to work, Will suddenly feels the tug of a hand on the back of his blood-stained shirt. He looks behind himself to see Hannibal’s eyes blearily open and Will feels a pang of regret as he squeezes Hannibal’s hand, before sitting down on a ledge away from the table.

Hannibal’s eyes remain on Will for a time as he works on himself. The look is pained and sorrowful—Will’s not sure if there’s also a hint of regret, but exhaustion and blood loss catch

up to Hannibal again and his eyes flutter closed.

It takes Will over two hours, but he finishes patching the both of them up. He takes the opportunity to also clean them up as best he can as Hannibal remains on the table. When he starts in on wiping over Hannibal's face, the older man's eyes flicker open and Will can't help smiling in relief at the sight.

"Hey there," Will says gently. "Just cleaning you up. By the way, do you have any antibiotics here?"

Hannibal nods yes slowly and Will considers for a moment why he's not saying anything in response, but then follows Hannibal's shaking arm as he points towards a cupboard in one corner of the galley kitchen. The cupboard is cooler than much of the yacht and has more than just vials of antibiotics in it. Finding a tablet and connecting it with what appears to be a satellite internet connection, Will gives himself a crash course in administering antibiotics and setting an IV with fluids.

It's not long after Will finishes with the IV that Hannibal passes out again. Will hooks himself up to a separate IV and administers antibiotics to himself—thankful that Hannibal has thought about everything bar Will doing what he did to them both.

Will hopes that Hannibal will forgive him. But as he gently rests beside the table, tablet perched on a shelf made just for it, Will thinks about where he should sail the yacht to, once Hannibal is stable enough to stumble to the bed Will saw in the main cabin.

He looks at estimated sailing times and estimates the yacht's top speed versus the current weather, tides and currents, and decides that they could probably make it to St John's in Newfoundland, Canada without being out at sea for too long.

An hour passes and Hannibal crawls back to consciousness.

"How are you doing?" Will asks.

Hannibal offers a weak smile, but again says nothing.

Trying not to worry, or look too closely at the wound that he sewed up on the side of Hannibal's neck, Will helps Hannibal to move from the galley to the cabin and settle down on the bed there, IV in tow. Making sure Hannibal is comfortable and unlikely to fall out, Will goes back and grabs the tablet. He returns and sets a timer to wake him up in a few hours so that he can draw up anchor and set sail.

Will climbs up on the bed and carefully curls up beside Hannibal, facing the sleeping man. At least he's reasonably sure it's sleep this time—just plain old exhaustion—and not because of the massive trauma.

Please don't die, Will thinks as his mind drifts to the nine days of sailing ahead of them before finally falling asleep.

The house by the sea

The house creaks when Will is not home. All six bedrooms of it.

Its white panels mark it out along the jagged coast of St John's, but it's an unremarkable location—aside from its new occupants. Hannibal is sure that he and Will are both incredibly remarkable. He doesn't need the article after article on the two of them and what may have transpired with the Red Dragon—that keeps popping up on TattleCrime and less salacious websites and news outlets—to know that the two of them are beyond the comprehension of nearly all.

Hannibal frowns as his tablet notifies him that he's used his allocated time for browsing aimlessly on the device. The iPad locks him out and he curses Will with a hiss for having figured out a piece of technology so effectively.

Setting the tablet down, Hannibal listens to the house around him. There is little shelter to calm the winds that whip past the house where it stands and Hannibal dislikes the emptiness that cannot muffle the sounds. No rich rugs or hundreds of books. The house came unfurnished and Will insisted on using Hannibal's funds as discreetly as possible—"*We're not being tracked down like you and Bedelia were in Florence, understand?"*—and so they had little in the humongous house. A simple couch and armchair. Flat pack dining table and chairs. The cheapest porcelain money can buy. A few paperbacks, as and when Will finds them for Hannibal in a bookshop in the harbor city. No wine, because Hannibal cannot drink on the combination of antibiotics and painkillers he's on.

His clothes are now as simple as the meals that Will cooks for the two of them—Hannibal's energy levels not yet recovered enough for the rigors of attending to their cooking needs. And to ensure they all seem like a normal, happy gay couple, Will works in a boatyard at the harbor, fixing engines for above minimum wage.

That Will wants to project the image of them as a couple is a topic of thought that often leaves Hannibal wandering the corners of his palace, when the painkillers let him float.

That the only bed in the house is a king and that Will sleeps in it with Hannibal? Whenever Hannibal dwells on this, he has to sit down as his blood pressure spikes, and he's left feeling as if his soul is on the verge of leaving his body. When Will lays down beside him at night, eyes on Hannibal's, glittering in the starlight, Hannibal wants to reach out—to touch and forgive. But he's scared to. If he was a great observer of Will before they plunged over the bluff, Hannibal finds himself now blind to what motivates Will.

He watches Will when he sleeps and attempts to consider what motivates a man, who could have left him for dead and gone back to something approaching family, when presented with the crumbling man before him.

The house is empty of belongings, but full of things unsaid.

Hannibal wants to scream.

***

“I’m home!” Will calls from the front hallway as he closes the door behind him. He has a bag of books in hand, and the fixings for dinner.

For a moment, he finds himself missing the cold noses that would greet him in homes past. The wagging tails and delighted licks. He closes his eyes, breathes in the unfamiliar salt tinged air of his new home and opens his eyes to the reality he has dealt himself and Hannibal.

The floorboards shift and pop, as Hannibal stands up in what is their sparsely decorated living room. Or, at least Will hopes it’s Hannibal, and not Jack Crawford making a house call. Following the sound, Will strides to the living room and smiles when he sees Hannibal standing with what appears to be less pain on his face than previous days. To the side of the couch, where Hannibal has been curled up under a blue, knitted blanket, Will notes that Hannibal’s to-read pile has dwindled to one book, and his read pile has grown.

Looking at the paper bag in his right hand, Will hopes that today’s picks will intrigue and delight. There had been a moment in the bookstore after work, in which Will had almost felt compelled to pick up *The Lucifer Effect* by Philip Zombardo, after spotting it on the contemporary psychology shelves. But he decided against it after looking at the blurb on the back of the cover—it would have been too unnecessarily passive aggressive a choice at the current stage in their relationship. *Maybe later.*

“I got you a bit of everything today,” Will says, as he sets the food bag to one side on the coffee table and instead walks forward with the bookbag in hand. “*The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself* by Sean Carroll, *The Fisherman* by John Langan, *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty and, finally, a copy of *The Glorious Heresies* by Lisa McInerney.”

Will offers Hannibal an even larger grin, “I figured we could move up a couple of decades (or centuries) in my picks of late.” Previously, Will had asked Hannibal to give him a list of books he wanted, but the older man had refused, and so Will had to use his own judgment for a man, who, as a a young man, had memorized all of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the complete works of Marcel Proust for fun. In their original languages.

Hannibal steps forward slowly, feet still unsure, and comes closer to Will than is strictly necessary, to retrieve the books. It’s an opportunity, one Will hasn’t allowed himself since the nights on the yacht. Will’s left hand itches to reach out and touch Hannibal beyond the assistance he’s provided in washing the man, changing his bandages and clothes. He’s still unsure if Hannibal wants him in his life.

Will swallows. “Hannibal,” he murmurs softly.

Hannibal meets Will’s gaze, eyes open and soft, a question somewhere, though Will isn’t sure what. He reaches his left hand out and gently cradles Hannibal’s right cheek.

A shocked breath escapes Hannibal.

“I hope you had a good day,” Will near whispers, smiles and then withdraws his hand. “I’ll get dinner on,” he says at more his usual volume and then turns and grabs the groceries before anything else happens.

***

Hannibal startles on the couch as Will sits down beside him. For a brief moment, the chicken chasseur they had for dinner feels like it might claw its way back up, but Hannibal settles, controlling his breathing as he takes in this unexpected delight.

“I hope you don’t mind?” Will asks, smelling strongly of the lemon dish soap he insists on using.

Offering a noncommittal shrug, Hannibal goes back to reading the Proust that had been the last remaining book on his pile, before Will had returned with his latest finds. But as Will pulls out a book that had been part of Hannibal’s read pile, a copy of *Ulysses* by James Joyce, Hannibal shuffles across the couch and throws the blue woolen blanket over the pair of them. He stops short of leaning into Will and cuddling up, but he enjoys the firm press of Will’s thigh against his own. Heat bleeding into him and warming his bones. Even without encephalitis cooking his brain, Will still runs hot.

“You know, I could bring you things other than books,” Will says into their companionable silence some half hour later.

Hannibal nods, not wishing to be drawn into eyebrow charades and typing things out on the iPad. But he curls up closer to Will, leaning his head on the man’s right shoulder.

“Okay, I’ll have a look after I’m done in the yard tomorrow.” Will goes back to reading and Hannibal turns his attention fully back to *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time* or *Remembrance of Things Past,* as the English editions are normally called) in the original French.

That night is the first time, since before his stay in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, that Hannibal has no nightmares. It may have something to do with Will’s hand being tangled with his as they both sleep.

You think too much

“The Jacobs’ m—”

“Already done. I’m finishing early,” Will says as he finishes cleaning his hands with some Tub O Scrub. He knows Hannibal despises the scent of the stuff but Will actually likes the hint of walnut.

Toby Niles leans on the counter beside him, arms crossed over his broad chest, a smile always present on the boatyard owner’s face. His overalls are covered in all manner of mechanical fluid and paint, the upper half tied about his waist as is his custom once he’s finished up for the day. Will would be climbing out of his own overalls once his hands are clean.

“You heading home early?” Toby asks with a smile. “I know you got someone waiting there for you. Susan Pope’s boy saw him last week outside that big ol’ house of yours.”

Will stops for a moment, now drying his hands, and ducks his head as if in embarrassment. It was probably for the best that Hannibal was seeking what little Vitamin D he could though Will prayed Hannibal was not pushing himself too hard in Will’s absence.

“That I do,” Will says carefully, unsure just how “open” Toby might be to same-sex relationships. “Mathias just loves it here.”

Toby slaps Will’s back fondly and chuckles. “You do realize that Harriet is going to be sorely disappointed you’re taken?”

“Oh, I know,” Will says, grinning as he turns to Toby.

“Alright, Daniel, you go get back to that man of yours.” Toby shares Will’s grin and heads off to the front of the main boat shed where his office lurks.

Some twenty minutes later, Will has walked past the bookstore he normally favors and entered an art supply store a few doors up the street. He crawls his memories of Hannibal’s home, office, that time in the Uffizi Gallery, the few supplies he had had in his BSHCI cell—drifting between paper, pencils, canvas, charcoal, paints and brushes.

“May I help you, sir?” comes a store assistant’s voice, as Will is drawn away from a memory of peace before it cycles back to the violence that happened not long after.

***

Hannibal sets the iPad down and turns off the screen, before he uses up all his allowed time. The headlines are predictable and make Hannibal itch to be everything that Jack fears. He prowls the cage of the house and his mind, pretty pictures of broken bodies elevated beyond this Earth and Hannibal wishes he could take Will and share more.

Oh, how he wants to share. Each night, Will shifts closer and Hannibal allows himself to fall into the younger man's orbit through the pull of inevitability that has been there since they first sat in a room together.

And every day, Hannibal wonders if this day will be the day that Will doesn't come home from work. That he tires of Hannibal and his silence, fleeing to a different new life. He tries to stop such thoughts, but the small fear lodges inside the back of Hannibal's mind most days —and today is no different.

Body protesting as Hannibal paces the living room, he winces as his side (where the bullet from the Dragon had pierced him) begins to throb. Not wanting to set himself back and resentful that he even has to consider such things, Hannibal sits back down on the couch and huffs out a breath. His eyes fall on the stack of books in his to-read pile, but they don't have the draw of the past weeks. His body is almost there—he wants to be back out in the world. To be out there and show Will he is still whole.

At the very least he wants to claim back the kitchen and provide Will with the meals and treats he deserves. Fetching groceries himself and choosing the dishes he serves.

A broken growl rumbles unexpectedly from Hannibal's throat, shocking him that even such a noise came from him. Breathing slowing, Hannibal sighs and rests his head against the back of the couch. *Will should be back soon*. *Perhaps he will allow me to cook supper this evening?* Hannibal considers, ignoring that fear of being alone again.

Suddenly, the front porch creaks and the door opens, sending a gust of chill air through the house.

"I'm home!" Will calls.

As if of their own volition, Hannibal's legs and feet compel him to rise and amble to the front hallway to greet Will. Reaching the hall, Hannibal's eyes widen as he takes in the sight of several bags on the floor, that are from neither the book shop nor the grocers they favor. And then he sees a canvas, some 4 foot across, and his breath stops.

"Hope you don't mind? I figured maybe you might want to do something other than reading." Will steps forward.

Unbidden, a tear descends Hannibal's cheek. He sniffs through his nose, unsure when he became such a mix of fear and longing.

"Hey, hey," Will sets down the bags he's carrying, a tomato breaking loose and rolling across the floor as Will draws level with Hannibal and pulls him into his arms. "What's wrong?"

It is their first embrace since the bluff and Hannibal clings to Will, wrapping his arms around Will's middle as he rests his face in the crook of Will's neck. He shakes with a silent sob and then another, and another. Will holds him tight, whispering sweet nothings into Hannibal's hair as he cries from relief and joy.

"Sssh, everything's fine," Will murmurs softly, kissing Hannibal's hair.

***

“Is that gumbo?” Will asks as he comes into the kitchen, a few days after Hannibal had cried in his arms. He comes up behind Hannibal and rests a hand on Hannibal’s back while Hannibal stirs the contents of a large pot on the stove. The spice and savory wafts of sausage, chicken and prawn make Will’s mouth water. He can’t recall the last time he had gumbo.

Hannibal nods yes, and tilts head to the side as he looks over at Will, the expression in his eyes questioning, asking silently “Did I do well?”

“Thank you so much,” Will says and for a moment he wants to close the distance between their mouths. To kiss and taste. But he draws back instead. “It looks almost done. I’ll set the table.”

Something glimmers in Hannibal’s eyes but the older man just nods and turns back to the meal.

Once Will’s changed out of his work clothes and washed up, they sit down for dinner at a dining table that’s not even half the size of what Hannibal once owned, but the closeness it offers is something that Will is increasingly appreciating. Hannibal can’t seem to help bumping their knees together and Will does nothing to stop the contact.

As he moans around his first mouthful of gumbo, he slips his foot behind Hannibal’s ankle without thought, and it’s only as he looks up and finds Hannibal looking at him wide eyed, that Will realizes what he’s done. He swallows and licks his lips, unsure whether he should draw his foot away or keep it there.

Hannibal raises his eyebrows and licks his lips. Will’s cheeks feel warm and there’s a blush on Hannibal’s cheeks that has nothing to do with the heat from their meal.

“It’s delicious,” Will says of the gumbo.

Hannibal bows his head slightly in acknowledgment of the praise.

“Best I’ve had in years.”

As if looking for a distraction, Will’s eyes focus on a spot just below Hannibal’s left ear and spots a smudge of red oil paint. “You’ve got something on your face,” Will adds.

Hannibal frowns, but before he can reach up and touch it, Will’s dodged away from the table and scrambled out of the dining room, heading for the study Hannibal’s turned into his art studio. He quickly tracks down a rag and a jar of white spirit. Opening up the jar, Will dips the tip of the rag in, wetting it in the flammable liquid and then pulls the rag out before tightening the lid on the jar again. He completely misses what’s on the canvas in the room, so focused on his task.

He heads back to the dining room where Hannibal frowns with a “it’s getting cold” look and Will crouches down beside him.

“This will only take a second, hold still.” Will says, holding up the fume laden rag to Hannibal’s face.

Hannibal stiffens and then relaxes as Will presses the rag to his face and wipes the paint away. It takes a few hard wipes, but then the paint is gone.

“How did you end up with paint there anyway?” Will asks as he steps back.

Hannibal shrugs and gives Will a pointed look, motioning at his food.

“Okay, okay, I’ll just put this back and wash my hands.”

A few minutes later, Will returns to the table and picks up his spoon again. The gumbo still retains much of its heat in the bowl and as he takes a mouthful, his breath catches because Hannibal is snaking his foot behind Will’s ankle. The simple intimacy makes Will’s heart race, as he tries to finish his meal with some degree of composure.

***

Will’s working on a couple of fly fishing lures as Hannibal paints on the opposite side of the study. They work in companionable silence, the scratch of brush and oil on canvas and the near silence of Will’s threading and positioning being the only real sounds. Hannibal does have a record player in one corner, but it fell silent some half-an-hour earlier and both are too engrossed in their handiwork to flip the record or put another on.

It’s a routine they’ve fallen into for the past few weeks and Hannibal knows Will knows that this isn’t the first canvas that Hannibal’s filled, but Hannibal hasn’t explained what happens to the filled canvases once they leave the house.

Though this particular painting has some familiar figures contained within, in unfamiliar poses, and it won’t be leaving the house. Will is Patroclus and Hannibal is Achilles, the painting shares a likeness with Gavin Hamilton’s 1760 rendition of “Achilles Lamenting the Death of Patroclus”. Hannibal won’t be selling his painting.

“Do you want a cup of tea?” Will asks suddenly from behind Hannibal, sock covered footsteps near silent. “Oh,” Will then adds and Hannibal knows that he’s finally seen who is in the painting.

He steps closer, green knitted sweater warmth feeding Hannibal’s chilled bones.

“Have you painted us as Achilles and Patroclus?”

Hannibal nods.

“It’s beautiful.” Will leans in, body brushing Hannibal’s. “I can’t believe how clear the details are.”

The closeness is agonizing and Hannibal wants to press in and show Will that they have a love for each other not unlike the two men on his canvas—only thankfully they are both alive. But despite the shared touches and bed, the blushes and smiles as Hannibal has healed,

he is still unsure where they stand. There is something growing stronger between them, but Hannibal isn't sure if it's what he's dared to hope for in all the years he's known Will. *It's not as if I can ask*, Hannibal thinks sourly for a moment and then Will closes in, mere inches from his creation.

"You have quite the gift," Will says a little breathlessly. He turns to Hannibal, their faces impossibly close for just friends. "Is this one to leave the house, too?"

Hannibal smiles and shakes his head. He expects Will to step back now, but he doesn't. Will slowly turns to face Hannibal and offers a crooked smile, before closing the remaining inches between them and pressing their lips together.

Body going ramrod straight, Hannibal's hands tighten on the brush in his hand and then relax, dropping the brush onto the dust sheet below as Will pulls Hannibal towards him, a hand on Hannibal's waist and a hand in his hair. The kiss deepens quickly, as Hannibal slides his tongue between Will's lips and the other man opens to him. Weeks—years—of longing crashes down around them like foaming waves, leaving Hannibal disorientated and out of breath.

Minutes pass and finally they allow each other to break the kiss and catch their breath.

"Is this okay?" Will asks.

Hannibal gives Will a look that can be translated as "you think too much" before reaching out and crushing Will's mouth to his own again.

White collar

“Hannibal, just what are you doing with all of your finished paintings?” Will asks, five days after their first kiss. There have been many more kisses since and some light petting, but nothing under waistbands. Will’s concerns about Hannibal’s still healing injuries are valid, but Hannibal is well aware of ways they could enjoy each other more physically without causing internal bleeding.

Sighing, Hannibal picks up the unlocked iPad between them. Their dinner dishes wait beside them, their meal finished—a rich beef stroganoff for which Hannibal wished the beef had not been grass fed. He types out a reply in the notes app they usually use for these kinds of conversations, and shows his response to Will.

“You’re selling them to private buyers.” Will draws his lower lip between his teeth, sucking, clearly unamused. His lip pops out of his mouth, plumper and more tempting than it was before and he adds, “And they know they’re not originals, right?”

Hannibal’s eyes widen, offering what they both knew is a faux show of innocence.

Will closes his eyes and rubs at his forehead. “You do remember that the FBI has an Art Crime Team? Please tell me you’re at least selling them to buyers outside North America?” He opens his eyes and waits for Hannibal’s reply.

Hannibal nods slowly.

“You’re selling them to buyers outside North America?”

Hannibal nods.

Will slumps back in his seat, relief palpable. “I know you don’t need the money. Are you doing this because, I don’t know, murdering people is kind of difficult at the moment?”

Hannibal curls over the edge of the table and places his head on its top in defeat.

Yes, he’d been missing going out for hunts—forget ostentatious displays of his prowess, which he loved—because he’d had years of being locked up in a cage and killing The Dragon did not make up for all those years. Still, he wanted to be strong enough to hunt, and while Will had been busy at the boatyard, Hannibal had been growing stronger and building a new Rolodex (though not as obvious as before).

Chair scraping across the floor, the sound making Hannibal wince, Will steps over to him and places a soothing hand on his back. He rubs gently, the touch understanding and making Hannibal’s shoulders release all their tension.

“Look,” Will sounds almost pained, his heart overflowing, “I see why you…” Will’s words trail off and he sucks in a breath, hand gripping Hannibal’s shoulder. “But if, once you’re better, you know of any pigs who deserve to… end up on our table…”

The hand leaves Hannibal's shoulder and Will gets down on his knees beside Hannibal, pulling him away from the table top to grasp Hannibal's hands in his own. Hannibal looks down to Will whose eyes are wet and imploring.

"I meant it when I said it was 'beautiful'," Will grimaces. "I just don't know how we might begin?"

Build on your Becoming together, is what you really mean, Hannibal thinks and offers Will a small teary smile. He nods and his mind is already alive with the possibilities of what hunting together may mean.

"And I don't plan on moving too soon," Will adds with a more stern look.

A blush creeps up Hannibal's cheeks, but he offers a questioning raise of his eyebrows, as if to say "but you do plan on moving".

"Yes, I don't want to spend the rest of our lives here. It's not that different from the places I grew up in." Will chuckles lowly. "Was kind of hoping that you might show me the world?"

A grin graces Hannibal's mouth, lips pulling back to reveal his pointed canines. *Oh, how I will show you the world, dear boy, and the world you*.

***

Will and Hannibal sit around the iPad, a YouTube video paused.

"No, I think the movement is a bit more like," Will slides his left hand over his right, "like that."

Hannibal lets out a long tired breath and repeats the two simple motions. Will's ASL training from a semester of college creaked when he first started teaching Hannibal American Sign Language, but his eidetic memory makes it easy enough for him to get back into the swing of things. And Hannibal's picking things up quickly enough, his own perfect memory making it easy for him to learn words and phrases.

At first, Hannibal had been reluctant to learn sign language and Will could tell it was because it was like they were giving up on Hannibal ever speaking again. And while they hadn't yet taken Hannibal to see a doctor—it being too risky this close to the US—Will had spent time reading up on Hannibal's injuries, and the chances of him regaining speech with surgery weren't guaranteed. So, Will argued that Hannibal should learn sign language, because sudden adult mutism was rare and it made sense if they acted like it was lifelong, and showed he knew how to communicate in some ways beyond typing or scribbling things down. Though once Hannibal masters ASL, Will is pretty sure he will be quickly moving on to Lingua Dei Segni Italiana (LIS (Italian Sign Language)).

Will nods as Hannibal finishes signing "nice to meet you" perfectly. The likelihood of Hannibal using the sign that often is incredibly low, still Will knows Hannibal likes to be able to demonstrate good manners to those who deserve them.

Suddenly, Hannibal signs “I love you” without fault and Will’s mouth goes dry. He signs “I love you too” back and swallows as he meets Hannibal’s eyes. He drinks in Will like he wants to swallow him whole and Will realizes that Hannibal’s probably been practicing ASL without his help, since he took the time limit off the iPad a few days previously, and that he’s showing off. That he’s been desperate to just talk and—

Strong hands—stronger than he’d been led to believe—pull Will onto Hannibal’s lap and his breath hitches as Hannibal kisses down his throat, soft beard tantalizing, teeth grazing just the right side of painful. After weeks, months, of treating Hannibal like he’s broken and delicate, Will feels the strength that’s taken root once more, and it demands to be sated in some way. As if the contact with Will is like a rain falling over a parched desert, allowing life to bloom once more.

Suddenly, Will feels small and like a god at the same time, as Hannibal’s mouth pushes prayers to his heated skin. His shirt is hastily unbuttoned, then Hannibal pulls it and his undershirt off, causing Will to moan as Hannibal latches onto one nipple, mouth wet and tongue torturous. No one’s explored Will’s body in this way before and he feels light headed as each touch and tease fills his dick. Below his ass, he feels Hannibal is similarly affected.

Hannibal unseats Will for a moment and stands, to work at Will’s remaining clothes and his own, stripping them down until they’re just naked in the fireplace-warmed air. Will takes a moment drinking in the sight of Hannibal, in a way he’s not seen him before, his full length something that Will finds himself wanting to do all manner of things with.

Hannibal sits back down and pulls Will back onto his lap, hands digging into his hips as he positions them just so—cocks stood between them, hard and leaking precome. Attention drawn to look down at them, Will shivers as Hannibal runs a finger over the tip of his cock and then watches wide eyed as Hannibal sucks his finger into his mouth, tasting Will.

Heart thumping in his chest, Will leans forward and steals the taste of himself from Hannibal’s mouth. Neither of them planned for this: gasping into each other’s mouths as Hannibal takes them both in hand, lingering injuries near forgotten as Will ruts into the press of flesh. Salty musk and firewood fills Will’s nostrils, as he takes from Hannibal everything he’s willing to offer, and then whines as Hannibal breaks the kiss to wet their lengths with his spit. He pulls on their lengths and then drags his hand down and Will forgives the lack of kissing, as pleasure jolts up his spine and settles in his groin; as he feels the building need to chase his release in Hannibal’s offerings.

Will brings their mouths together again, one hand cradling the back of Hannibal’s head as the other grips the back of the couch. Tongues fleshy and slick, Will drinks from Hannibal as he moves with Hannibal’s hand. Hannibal’s free hand continues to hold onto Will’s hip, the grip hard enough to bruise. Slip-sliding desperate heat—as years of unfulfilled contact seizes them with a burning intensity that Will hadn’t know it was possible to ever feel—drags their orgasms from them, as Will comes over them and then Hannibal, their come mixing as it covers Hannibal’s hand, their lengths, and stomachs. Hannibal jerks them for a few more strokes, before coming and then releases them.

Mouths separating so they can breathe, Will watches Hannibal takes his come covered hand and licks it clean. Will feels the stirring fires of arousal trying to prick at him again and he’s

not sure he remembers even being this horny as a teenager.

Once his hand is come-free, Hannibal smiles up at him and Will feels like he could drown in the adoration that Hannibal looks at him with. Will leans in and kisses Hannibal's jaw. Against his skin, he murmurs, "Bath?"

Hannibal writes the word yes into the skin of Will's lower back. The two of them disentangle, though Will wishes they didn't have to. Instead, he laces their fingers together and leads Hannibal upstairs and to the large copper bathtub that Hannibal insisted on them having installed just a few weeks ago.

Date night

The restaurant's pillar fronted entrance and red paint exterior causes Hannibal to quirk an eyebrow as he takes in the building. It's old, but not old-world-old, though still archaic for the city. Snow is swept to the sides of the sidewalk. He had felt a little put out when Will suggested they go out somewhere for a meal, but then Will had explained that he wanted to take Hannibal on a date—an *actual* date. Will's soulful, pleading, azure eyes had instantly put Hannibal at a disadvantage and so he had agreed to the venture, rewarded for his acquiescence by Will blowing him beside the coffee maker in the kitchen.

Will's technique needed work, but he is getting better.

That was two hours ago and as they enter the restaurant, apparently one of the best in the whole of Canada, Hannibal hopes he finds the food palatable—less concerned about them being recognized. The two of them look far removed from when Uncle Jack last saw them. Hannibal's hair is long and braided, his beard well shaped and oiled—he looks more like a coffee-shop owner that sells coffee to people who wear knitted beanies and read French poetry to look cool rather than for fun.

His and Will's suits fit, but are far less ostentatious than Hannibal would ideally like. Hannibal wears a deep chocolate suit and cream shirt, no tie but collar undone, and dark brown Italian loafers. Will's suit is teal, matching his eyes, his shirt white and also open at his neck, his shoes black Oxfords. Will's hair is all curls and his facial hair is trimmed close but still hides the Dragon's handiwork.

Entering the restaurant, it's clear they're some of the best dressed diners there, but not necessarily the only ones. They have a reservation and they're taken to a table that is well placed and commands a good view of all exits and entrances. Hannibal can feel himself relaxing at being able to see his flight options—it's been some time since he had even the passing tingling of fear, but then he hasn't felt as weak as he has done since he was a child. *And all because of Will*.

Taking his seat beside Will, elbow to elbow, he looks on his love with a wry smile. The Botticelli curls and cherubic eyes belie a monster that Hannibal is pleased to be drawing out from its shell.

Will orders for them, under Hannibal's direction typed out on Will's cell, noting the items on the wine list and the menu that will likely be best. Will orders them seven courses, starting with an entree of cod, carrot, fennel and sea urchin; an appetizer of prosciutto with manchego, chili honey—and at some point a main dish of lamb will waltz before them. The wine will start with a new world chardonnay, before shifting to a cabernet sauvignon for the richer dishes like lamb. The amounts involved will add up to a substantial meal, but the time between courses will allow for conversation and digestion.

"Thank you," Will says, as their waiter hurries away with their order. He turns to Hannibal. "Remind me to order for you if we ever end up in New Orleans," Will smirks.

“I’ll hold you to that,” Hannibal signs, leg brushing Will’s. He strokes a curl away from Will’s eyes.

“It’ll be worth the wait,” Will reassures, eyes bright.

Hannibal can’t resist picking up Will’s right hand and kissing it gently, thinking, *Anywhere with you is worth waiting for.*

Once the wine arrives and then their first course, Hannibal notes with mild disdain that a toad of a man is watching them from a corner of the room. Look disapproving. Hannibal knows what that look means and he’s killed people for it in the past. It’s not until the toad finishes his meal around their third course, that Hannibal’s suspicions are confirmed.

“Disgusting,” the toad says, as he reaches their table on the way out, eyes bulging. His graying hair is spiked up with gel forming a poor attempt to look younger than his years. His clothes are several seasons out of date. And he’s tanned and looks like the kind of man who’s mid-life crisis has involved sailing, protein powder and the gym.

Hannibal raises a non-committal eyebrow. Will stays silent.

“You shouldn’t be allowed out in public.”

Will picks up Hannibal’s hand and kisses the back of it, taunting. Cruel. “It must be so hard to see any perfect pair when one dines alone.”

The toad’s words are lost to himself as his tongue ties itself in knots.

“Yes, please, do go on and continue your night alone. We’re not stopping you,” Will adds.

Face turning red, the toad turns on his heel and powers out of the restaurant.

Gorgeous, Hannibal thinks as he eyes Will’s neck. *Utterly stunning*.

“I’m sorry about that,” says their waiter as he arrives to collect the remains of their third course. “Mister Andrews hasn’t been his best since his wife died.”

Will and Hannibal nod solemnly, saying nothing further on the matter until their waiter leaves once more.

Alone again in their bubble of perfection, Will leans into Hannibal and whispers, “Can we?”

Suddenly all Hannibal can hear is the rush of blood in his ears as he fights to calm himself. He answers with a kiss to Will’s lips.

***

The thing that made Hannibal’s reign as the Chesapeake Ripper so hard to track and trace, aside from leaving zero forensic evidence intentionally, was that Hannibal waited some time before performing his kills. What Will now knows is that for the main bulk of Hannibal’s

larder, however, the older man waited some weeks—maybe months or years—before calling in on the cards lined up on his Rolodex.

He senses that the tightly coiled energy within Hannibal (that is usually allowed to sate its blood lust as and when required) was hardly satisfied by the killing of the Dragon. It was but a single cloud raining on a parched desert of viciousness and cruelty, after more than three years without rain.

But equally, Will can feel the calculating side of Hannibal that wants to wait long enough, so that suspicion is unlikely to fall upon them. There's also research that must be done. Habits and routines to be uncovered. Will gets a promise from Hannibal that Hannibal will wait to kill Mister Andrews, and that Will must be with him when it happens.

Months pass. More names are added to a mental list that Will knows Hannibal is holding onto. Many names are there because of Will.

A manager from a Tim Hortons several towns over feeds them over Christmas and New Year.

Mister Andrew still walks.

A dog breeder a few more towns away disappears.

Mister Andrew still walks.

Each time they go forth to stock up, Will joins Hannibal and each time is a revelation.

Winter becomes spring and then spring becomes summer—and the pair of them are still nowhere on the FBI's radar, and Will is (gasp) making friends at work. And Hannibal's pantry and larder are refreshed regularly.

Friends means social engagements. Will doesn't know where the idea comes from initially, what train of thought kicks off the idea to suggest to Hannibal that perhaps they should host a barbecue down at Toby Niles' boatyard, because the man has a fine barbecue there and maybe Will (Daniel) has been bragging about how well Hannibal (Mathias) can cook all manner of delicious food. Because Hannibal plus barbecue is an unknown entity and Will is *curious*.

Yes, surely Hannibal must be as good at the grill as he is at most things involving food? Will thinks before finally asks one Monday morning, over a breakfast of eggs, sausages, mushrooms and spinach (all locally sourced):

"Hannibal, can we host a barbecue? It's the St. John's Pride Parade in a few weeks." Will picks up his coffee. "I know we might need to source a few more cuts, but don't you think it would be just perfect if Mister Andrews joined us? Plus, I've got people asking after you and I know you miss cooking for large groups of people."

Hannibal meets Will's eyes over his coffee mug, but signs or motions nothing.

Will presses on. "And look, unless we move out of North America, a couple like us hosting the kinds of dinner parties you're known for? That will just draw too much unnecessary

attention.” Will takes a sip of coffee and waits for Hannibal to show any sign of disagreement or interest.

Steepling his hands over his plate, Hannibal gives Will a long, considered look before finally signing, “We’ll kill Mister Andrews together tonight. Does Niles know you want to host a barbecue?”

Will shakes his head.

“Do mention it today,” Hannibal signs, picking up his knife and fork and continuing with his breakfast.

***

Despite hunting many times since their first date (and there have been many dates since), Hannibal feels a prickling low panic at the base of his spine as he and Will lie in wait for Mister Andrews in the parking lot the toad uses, when he visits Taylor’s. In fact, Mister Andrews is a regular at Taylor’s—heading to the same fine restaurant Will took Hannibal on their first date—every other week.

Hannibal thinks on how dispassionate Will has been during their previous hunts, but now as he waits with Will in the shadows of the lot, and realizes his own disquiet is because Will has not been as involved in their recent hunts, not since the Dragon.

It’s past ten at night and the streets surrounding the parking lot are quietening down for the day. The buildings that look onto the lot are all dark. There are no surveillance cameras. Mister Andrews may enjoy fine dining, but the lot he’s parked in is not close to the restaurant. He happens to pick this lot so that he can park for free.

Habits are life forming and they can also be life ending.

Since Mister Andrews parked for the evening, a used silver Honda has joined Mister Andrews’ car and shall be driven by Will. He will follow Hannibal, who will be driving Mister Andrews’ car, to a long abandoned farm that has recently been bought by a shell company, hidden in such a way that it will never be traced back to Hannibal’s inexhaustible funds. The only way anyone will discover the fate of Mister Andrews, is if they DNA test the meat in the upcoming barbecue that Niles is so excited to have at the boatyard. And the chances of the meat being tested are zero.

Mister Andrews’ lean form marches into view. Hannibal looks to Will and sees a glint in the younger man’s eyes—one not there before, and feels perhaps tonight is the true test of whether Will has truly Become. Like shadows, Will and Hannibal detach from each other and circle round to Mister Andrews as he walks to his black Volkswagen.

Hannibal steps into Mister Andrews line of sight and waves, causing the man to pause, eyebrows drawn, as Will pads up behind the toad and gets an arm around his neck. Andrews struggles and Hannibal watches with a smile as his boy cuts off Andrews’ air supply, that glint still in his eyes as he shushes the toad.

“Ssh, ssh,” Will murmurs, left leather gloved hand digging into Mister Andrews’ hair and holding him in place, along with the arm on his neck. “Ssh.”

Seconds pass and finally the toad succumbs to unconsciousness.

The meat will be bitter, but the marinades and such that Hannibal has planned will hide the taste.

Together, the two of them truss Mister Andrews up in the back of his own car and take him to their farm. It’s not until Mister Andrews is hanging from his wrists attached to a barn beam hook, feet tied to a drainage grate—consciousness returning—that Will takes his place at Hannibal’s side. They wear matching plastic suits, shoes covered. Ready to cut.

Hunting knife in hand, Will steps forward to Andrews and asks, “Welcome back, Simon. As you can see, we’ve decided you no longer have to enjoy the rest of your evenings alone.” Will takes another step forward. “In fact, you don’t have to ever suffer through an evening by yourself ever again.”

Oh! Hannibal thinks, a smile blossoming on his lips. *Playing with our food*. And it’s as Will nudges forward again, that Hannibal understands that tonight will be different.

“Please,” Mister Andrews pleads, “I don’t know what this is about, but—”

“You were rude to us at Taylor’s, before Christmas. Hypercritical of our relationship.” Will motions between himself and Hannibal. “As you might understand, we did not appreciate your insights.”

A memory falls into place for Mister Andrews, eyes widening. “Look, I meant nothing of it.”

Will glances at Hannibal who gives him a look that asks “having fun?” to which Will replies with a smirk, before turning back to the toad.

“No, you did. You certainly did. You said: ‘You shouldn’t be allowed out in public.’ I think your message was clear.”

With one final step Will is close enough to reach around Mister Andrew’s middle, and so he grabs the man by the back, pulling Andrews’ body closer as he twists and quakes—unable to escape his bonds.

“Ple—” the toad’s cries splutter to nothing as Will slices across Andrews’ neck. A crimson tide erupts from the cut and bathes Will as he holds his head up to greet his sentence.

Hannibal commits the sight to a new wing he’s building in his mind palace. The wing is based on the chapel of a deserted convent Hannibal stumbled across in his youth.

Afternoon delight

The steaks and chops are marinating in the fridge, delicately herbed and spiced sausages and burgers beside them. On the kitchen counters, an army of homemade buns and baps are cooling. In just over an hour, Will and Hannibal will watch the parade and then descend upon Niles' boatyard to start the barbecue. But Will has other buns in mind as he watches Hannibal set his final tray of buns on a cooling rack.

Will stalks over to Hannibal and pulls at the apron around his waist, undoing its ties and setting it down on the counter top. He brushes up against Hannibal and turns him around.

"I know you want to get ready, all finely coiffed for our diners, but do you think," Will leans in admiring Hannibal's cut hair and cleanly shaved face, "we could—"

Will's words are cut off as Hannibal yanks Will against him, quickly kissing his way into Will's mouth. All day, Will has lurked the edges of the kitchen, chased away nearly every moment he got within a foot of Hannibal. Now the temptation has proven too great.

Hannibal gives a low growl, chest rumbling against Will as he demands Will open to him and Will happily obliges, legs opening to Hannibal as he's the one maneuvered against the counter. Sour lime from one marinade, and bitter coffee, brushes over Will's palette as he melts into Hannibal. Will's given the attention he's craved since Hannibal left him in bed earlier that morning, hands pressing tight to his hip and the back of his neck. Longing hot and hard unfurls inside Will and he can't help grinding against Hannibal, pushing against the tent in his cargo shorts.

"Han-nibal, please," Will whines, as they allow each other air.

Hannibal huffs an amused breath and seems to take pity on Will, pulling out of the kitchen and towards the stairs.

Their bedroom is lit by the warm mid July sun, cooled by an open window that allows what little sea breeze there is to drift inside. Clothes fall to the floor and Hannibal throws Will onto their bed as soon as they're naked. Both hard and leaking, Will moans and pants as Hannibal opens him up with lube covered fingers, doing so with the speed of a man racing to meet their social plans for the day *and* satisfy their lover, before he lets anyone else set eyes upon them.

Perhaps Hannibal is also just eager to bury himself inside of Will, because as soon as Will's taking two fingers easily, Hannibal flips him onto his stomach, forcing Will onto all fours. Ass in the air, a breeze teasing the lube dripping from his entrance, Will moans at how empty he is. Hannibal soothes a hand down Will's side and settles in behind him.

The hot, heavy weight of Hannibal's slicked cock presses to Will's hole, waiting. "Fuck, Hannibal, I want it!" Will begs.

A split second and Hannibal is sinking into Will, the length of him burning Will's insides because he hasn't been prepped for as long as he usually is. The pain and sudden stretch are welcome and maddening, making Will bow his head into the silk sheets covering their bed. His own cockhead drips pre-come and is teased by the coolness of the bed below him.

Hannibal only gives Will a moment to adjust and then he slides nearly out, before ramming into Will and sending him careening forwards. Desperate for anything to hold onto as Hannibal fucks into him, Will grabs onto the bed's headboard, hands tight on the vertical slats. Settling into the new position, Will dips his ass just a notch causing Hannibal to hit that oh-so-sensitive nub inside of him, and what little burn remains is replaced by blinding bliss.

"FUCK! HANNIBAL!" Will near screams as Hannibal pistons in and out of him. It's fast and utterly perfect, with Will's prostate rammed with every thrust from Hannibal.

A grunt escapes Will as Hannibal pulls Will up onto just his knees, one arm wrapped across Will's chest, as the other seeks out Will's untouched cockhead. Hannibal takes Will in hand as he fucks into Will, hungry to sate Will before he finds his own release. Panting and babbling, Will fucks himself down onto Hannibal's cock and then up into his fist, tight hot pleasure boiling near.

Low rumbles emanate from Hannibal's chest and Will dances across the edge, spilling over Hannibal's hand and the bed, as Hannibal pushes into him past the point of Will's pleasure and into oversensitivity. Like a high heat Will wants to scrabble away from but stay near at the same time, Hannibal finds his own release, as Will's body trembles and tears wet the corners of his eyes. Hannibal pumps into Will, filling him, until there is nothing left.

***

Sunscreen on, Will serves drinks as Hannibal cooks, their party of twelve chatting merrily away. Flags from the parade dangle from the nearby boats, and Toby Niles is wearing a bright Pride-themed tie-dye t-shirt. Hannibal has to keep avoiding Will's boss's feet, for the man has chosen to wear sandals with socks, and while Hannibal won't kill Toby over it, he'd rather not have his appetite spoiled. Thankfully, the barbecue is built right beside the water that meets the boatyard, ready to send the movable metal structure into the ocean should a barbecue get out of hand and threaten Toby's boatyard. Their guests are on a pontoon that juts out from the concrete and stone foundations of the yard.

The ten other guests are all people Will knows through Toby, and Hannibal knows only Will's boss. Hannibal is dressed in a fresh pair of gray slacks, white shirt with sleeves rolled up and a black apron with "kiss the chef" written on it. Will is more simply dressed in deep-tan chino shorts, a white t-shirt on just the right side of tight, and sandals. They've both tamed back their hair and beards.

Setting a pair of tongs to one side, Hannibal pulls the cover over the barbecue for a moment and turns to their dinner guests. Will thrusts a dry martini in his hand and offers him a kiss to the cheek.

"I've gotta say, what you're cooking smells just delightful. You need to share your marinade recipes," Susan Pope gushes.

Hannibal sets his martini down and signs, “Secret family recipe,” which Will translates for the others.

Susan cackles. “Okay, okay. I suppose Daniel knows it then, eh?”

Will grins. “Yes, but Mathias would not let me in the kitchen this past day as he readied everything.”

“And you baked your own buns *and* baps?” Toby observes.

Hannibal nods and takes another sip of his drink. The compliments rain high as the conversation turns to work on their house and what Hannibal does when Will is at work.

Returning to the meat, Hannibal checks on it and finds that the first batch is done. Motioning Will over, he has him ferry away plates of cooked steaks, sausages and burgers for their eager diners to launch themselves upon. Just as Hannibal sets one final batch of burgers on the grill to cook, the coals cooler now, Will slinks up behind him.

“You know, I’m not sure I’ve completely forgiven you yet for my all day kitchen ban,” Will says as he wraps his arms around Hannibal’s waist.

Hannibal snorts and sets the lid of the barbecue down again. Will spins them around and faces him. It’s at this point that Hannibal notices that they are beside the edge of the boatyard, a footstep away from the water. He meets Will’s eyes with a look that says “Will, you wouldn’t” but even as he looks into those pools of azure, he knows the answer.

Time stops as Will pitches them into the water below and the world doesn’t end.

They break the surface together, in each other’s arms, bobbing along in the harbor as their guests stare down at them in disbelief.

Hannibal grips Will tight as the younger man says against his lips, “I love you.”

The only right reply is a kiss.

Epilogue

Jack Crawford doesn't need the painting of Will showering in blood to confirm for him what he already knew about this house by the sea in St John's:

Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham are alive and together.

But while the spare bedroom filled with canvases showing Will and Hannibal in all manner of classical styles certainly confirmed it for him, it wasn't enough to say for sure that Will was alive. And there was a part of Jack that hoped Will had died on that cliff and these were just the paintings of a madman. Jack knew as soon as they started to talk to neighbors and acquaintances that he would have no more delusions left to hide behind.

"It's Lecter alright," Jack confirms, more for himself than the members of the Art Crime Team whose raid it is, along with their Canadian counterparts.

The room is a shrine to one man's obsession and Jack sees what he had refused to see all those years ago in his office, when he first placed Will and Hannibal in the same room.

It's dark and hungry, deep and heavy, devouring and hedonistic.

One man's love for another.

FIN

End Notes

Thanks for reading!

If you want to find me over on Twitter, head to hitthebookspost.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!